



Joint statement on *Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc*

Trigger warning: Residential schools, death.

As leaders within the B.C. health care system, we are united in our grief upon learning the tragic news of the 215 children found at the site of the former Kamloops Residential School this past week. This is the latest heart-wrenching and horrific example of the truth known by Indigenous people for decades. Our thoughts go out to the *Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc* community and to all First Nations people.

We support the cultural work and protocols underway, including that of *Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc*, Indigenous people, communities, and organizations. We recognize the work that the First Nations Health Authority is doing to support First Nations communities and, as system partners, we are ready to work in solidarity together. Information on supports currently available can be found at: <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use> and below:

- **24-hour KUU-US Crisis Line** at 1-800-588-8717
- **Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum Society** at 1-888-403-3123
- **Indian Residential School Survivors Society** at 1-800-721-0066 or 604-985-4464

We struggle in our search for the right words to say to Indigenous people and communities, Indigenous staff and medical staff, patients, partners and friends. The true discomfort lies in knowing and acknowledging the intent and ongoing impacts of colonialism and settlement on this land, accepting and living with this discomfort, and our contributing organizational accountabilities as part of our commitment to anti-Indigenous racism, anti-colonialism and cultural safety and humility.

In the health system, we know harm continues to happen with the existence of systemic racism embedded in policies, practices and institutions. The evidence is clear that Indigenous people suffer poorer care outcomes; are being disproportionately impacted by the toxic drug crisis; and have lesser opportunities for meaningful employment in the organizations we lead. With this, a legacy of trauma was created impacting the health and wellness of generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

In issuing this statement, we are acknowledging that words are not enough; that a society that is respectful, inclusive, and equitable and just for all, will not come of good intentions alone.

We are holding each other accountable for intentional action and are committing, together, to do the work that must be done to stop Indigenous-specific racism in the health care system in B.C.

As we move forward, we humbly open ourselves to the guidance of local First Nation governments, Knowledge Keepers and Elders, along with colleagues from the First Nations Health Authority, First Nations Health Council, Métis Nation B.C., Inuit community and Aboriginal Friendship Centres of B.C., but acknowledge that the obligation for leading change lies with us.

We are health care leaders. We are health care providers. We are all accountable to heal, not harm, and to care equally for all. We owe this to every child silenced forever at *Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc*, to their families and future generations and to all people we serve.

Issued jointly on behalf of B.C.'s health authorities/organizations:

- *Colleen Erikson, board chair and Richard Jock, president & CEO, First Nations Health Authority*
- *Jim Sinclair, board chair and Dr. Victoria Lee, president & CEO, Fraser Health*
- *Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair and Susan Brown, president & CEO, Interior Health*
- *Leah Hollins, board chair and Kathy MacNeil, president & CEO, Island Health*
- *Colleen Nyce, board chair and Cathy Ulrich, president & CEO, Northern Health*
- *Eric Harris, board chair and Fiona Dalton, president & CEO, Providence Health Care*
- *Tim Manning, board chair and Dr. David Byres, interim president & CEO, Provincial Health Services Authority*
- *Dr. Penny Ballem, board chair and Vivian Eliopoulos, president & CEO, Vancouver Coastal Health*